THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE

by

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The historical predictions on the fate of bourgeois society have been confirmed. In the system of the free market economy, which pushed men to labor-saving discoveries and finally subsumed them in a global mathematical formula, its specific offspring, machines, have become means of destruction not merely in the literal sense: they have made not work but the workers superfluous. The bourgeoisie has been decimated, and the majority of members have lost their independence; where they have not been thrown into the ranks of the proletariat, or more commonly into the masses of unemployed, they have become dependents of the big concerns or the state. The El Dorado of bourgeois existence, the sphere of circulation, is being liquidated. Its work is being carried out in part by the trusts which, without the help of banks, finance themselves, eliminate the commercial intermediaries and take control of the stockholders organizations. Part of the business sphere is handled by the state. As the *caput mortuum* of the transformation process of the bourgeoisie there remain only the highest levels of the industrial and state bureaucracy. "One way or another, with or without the trusts, the official representative of capitalist society, the state, must finally take over the management of production... All social functions of the capitalists are now discharged by salaried civil servants... And the modern state is once again only the organization which bourgeois society creates for itself to maintain the general external conditions for the capitalist means of production against encroachments either by the workers or by individual capitalists... The more productive forces the state takes over as its own property, the more it becomes a collective capitalist, the more citizens of the state it exploits. The workers remain wage laborers, proletarians. The relationship to capital is not abolished but becomes far more acute."[1] In the transition from monopoly to state capitalism, the last stage offered by bourgeois society is "the appropriation of the large productive and commercial organisms, first by joint-stock companies, later by trusts and then by the state."[2] *State capitalism is the authoritarian state of the present.*

For the natural course of the capitalist world order, theory prescribes an unnatural end: the united proletarians will destroy the last form of exploitation, state-capitalist slavery. The rivalry of the wage-laborers among themselves had guaranteed the prosperity of the private entrepreneurs. That was the freedom of the poor. Once poverty was an estate; then it became a panic. The poor were supposed to run and shove each other aside like a crowd in a burning auditorium. The way out was the factory gate, labor for the entrepreneurs. There could never be enough of the poor; their numbers were a blessing for capital. But to the same extent that capital concentrated the workers in the large factories, it came into crisis and made its own

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1. Friedrich Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, 1882 ed. (Berlin, 1924), pp. 46-47. Cf. Friedrich Engels, *Herrn Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft*, 10th ed. (Stuttgart, 1919), pp. 298 ff.
2. Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus*, p. 55.

existence a hopeless prospect. The workers cannot hire themselves out yet another time. Their interests push them inexorably to socialism. When the ruling class "must feed the workers, instead of being fed by them," revolution is at hand. This theory of the end grows out of a situation which was still ambiguous, and is itself ambiguous: either it counts on collapse through an economic crisis, thereby ruling out stabilization of an authoritarian state, as Engels in fact predicted. Or else the theory expects the triumph of the authoritarian state, thus foreclosing collapse through a crisis, which was always defined by the market economy. *But state capitalism does away with the market and hypostatizes the crisis for the duration of eternal Germany.* Its "economic inevitability" signifies a step forward, a breathing spell for the rulers. Unemployment becomes organized. Only the already well-established section of the bourgeoisie is still really interested in the market. Big industrialists today denounce liberalism only when state administration remains too liberal for them, not completely under their control. The modern planned economy can feed the masses better and be better fed by them than by the vestiges of the market. A period with its own social structure has dispensed with the free market, and demonstrates its own particular tendencies nationally and internationally.

Capitalism's ability to outlive the market economy was announced long ago in the fate of the working class organizations. The call to unite in trade unions and parties was carried out to the letter, but these organizations carried out not so much the unnatural tasks of the united proletariat, namely the resistance to class society in general, as that of submitting to the natural conditions of their own development into mass organizations. They integrated themselves into the transformations of the economy. Under liberalism they had devoted themselves to the aim of improving their lot. Because of their solvency, the influence of certain more secure strata of workers took on a greater weight. The party pressed for social legislation; the life of the workers under capitalism was to be alleviated. The union fought for advantages for skilled workers. As ideological justification there emerged phrases about factory democracy and the evolution to socialism. Work as a vocation: of the critique of work as drudgery, which was the only way the past had seen it, there scarcely remained a word. Work was transformed from the bourgeois' badge of merit into the longing of the disinherited. The large organizations spread an idea of socialization which was scarcely distinguishable from statification, nationalization or socialization in state capitalism. The revolutionary vision of emancipation continued to live only in the calumnies of the counter-revolutionaries. When fantasy had completely detached itself from any basis in fact, it substituted for the existing state apparatus the party and trade-union bureaucracies, for the principle of profit the yearly plan of the functionaries. Even utopia was structured according to directive. *Men were conceived as objects, if necessary as their own.* The bigger the organizations became, the more their leadership owed its place to a selection of the most capable. Robust health, the good fortune of being bearable to the average member and not unbearable to the ruling powers, a dependable aversion to adventure, the gift of being able to deal with the opposition, a preparedness to proclaim the greatest incoherence as a virtue to the crowd and to oneself, nihilism and self-contempt—these are the necessary qualities.

To control and replace these leaders becomes for technical reasons more and more difficult with the growth of the apparatus. Between the real expediency of their remaining in power and their personal determination not to step down, a prestabilized harmony reigns. The leading man and his clique become as independent in the working-class organization as the board of directors in an industrial monopoly is from the stockholders. The means of power, on the one hand the factory reserves, on the other the funds of the party or union, are at the disposal of the leadership for use against any trouble. Those who are dissatisfied are scattered and must rely on their own pocketbooks. In an extreme case the resistance is beheaded, bought off at the stockholders' meeting or expelled from the party conference. *Whatever seeks to extend itself under domination runs the danger of reproducing it.* Insofar as the proletarian opposition in the Weimar Republic did not meet its downfall as a sect, it also fell victim to *the spirit of administration.* The institutionalization of the top ranks of capital and labor have the same basis: the change in the means of production. Monopolized industry, which makes the mass of stockholders into victims and parasites, pushes the masses of workers into supporting passivity. They have more to expect from the protection and assistance of the organizations than from their work. In the Western democracies the leaders of the big working class organizations find themselves in the same relationship to their membership as the executives of integral statism have to the society as a whole: they keep the masses, whom they take care of, under strict discipline, maintain them in hermetic seclusion from uncontrolled elements, and tolerate spontaneity only as the result of their own power. Far more than the pre-fascist statesmen who mediated between the monopolists of labor and industry and who could never extricate themselves from the utopia of a humanitarian version of the authoritarian state, these labor leaders strive for their own kind of national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*).

There has been no lack of rebellions against this development in the labor organizations. The protests of the splinter groups were as uniform as their fate. They directed themselves against the conformist politics of the leadership, the development into a mass party, the rigid discipline. They discovered quite early that the original goal of the dissolution of oppression and exploitation in every form was only a propaganda phrase in the mouths of the functionaries. In the trade unions they criticized the wage settlements which limit strikes; in the party they criticized the collaboration in capitalist legislation because it is corrupting; in both organizations they criticized the Realpolitik. They recognized that the thought of social revolution by legal means is more seriously compromised the more members that are recruited to this thought. But the bureaucrats at the top, because of their position, are the better organizers, and if the party is to exist, it cannot do without experienced specialists. Everywhere the efforts of the opposition failed to take the rank-and-file with them or to develop new forms of opposition. When the opposition groups achieved greater significance after their departure, they in turn became bureaucratic institutions. *Integration is the price which individuals and groups have to pay in order to flourish under capitalism.* Even those unions whose program stood opposed to all parliamentarians found themselves, with an increase of their membership, a long

way from the extravagances of the general strike and direct action. Already in the First World War, by accepting a Ministry of Munitions, they made known their preparedness for peaceful cooperation. Even the Maximalists after the revolution were unable to cope with the fact that the ignominious sociology of the party apparatus still won out in the end. If revolutionaries pursue power in the way one pursues loot or criminals, it first shows itself in the course of action. Instead of dissolving in the end into the democracy of the councils, the group can maintain itself as a leadership. Work, discipline and order can save the republic and tidy up the revolution. Even when the abolition of the state is written on its banner, that party transfigured its industrially backward fatherland into the secret vision of those industrial powers who were growing sick on their parliamentarism and could no longer live without fascism. *The revolutionary movement negatively reflects the situation which it is attacking.* In the monopolistic period private and state control of estranged labor is expanded. In the private sector the socialist struggle is directed against the anarchy of the market economy; in the private and public sector together, resistance is directed against the last form of exploitation. The historical contradiction, of demanding at the same time both rational planning and freedom, emancipation and regulation, can be overcome; with the Maximalists nevertheless authority ultimately won out and performed miracles.

The opposition can exist as a mass party only in a market economy. The state, which became independent through the splintering of the bourgeoisie, is defined in terms of its parties. In part it pursues the general bourgeois aim of repulsing the old feudal powers, and partly represents its own social groups. The proletarian opposition has also profited from the mediation of domination through parties. The splintering of the ruling class, which was instrumental in the separation of powers and in the creation of constitutional rights of the individual, was the prerequisite for workers associations. In Europe the freedom of assembly is one of the essential concessions of the class to the individual, as long as the individuals in the class are not directly identifiable with the state, so that it is not necessary to fear state encroachment. Even from the beginning, as is well known, respect for the individual, the sanctity of the home, and the inviolability of persons arrested, as well as other rights, were trampled upon as soon as it ceased to concern the bourgeoisie. The history of prison revolts as political insurrections, and especially the history of the colonies, are commentaries on the humanity of the bourgeoisie. As far as the right to organize affected the proletariat, it was from the very beginning a stepchild among human rights. "All citizens should certainly be permitted to assemble," said the advisor for Labor Problems in the Constitutional Assembly of 1791, "however, citizens of a given profession or trade should not be allowed to assemble in order to advance their own interests."[3] Under the guise of dismantling the guilds and the other corporate forms, the liberals have been able to hinder, but ultimately not prevent the development of unions. Above and beyond the tasks of bourgeois parties, the program of the socialist organizations still contained the idea of revolution. It appeared as the accelerated process

3. Bouchez and Roux, *Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française,* vol. 10 (Paris, 1834), p. 194.

of realizing toward the bourgeoisie's ideological goal of the general prosperity. The abolition of private ownership of the means of production, the elimination of the waste of energy and materials in the market system through planned economy, the elimination of the right of inheritance and other programs were rational demands for the time. In opposition to the bourgeoisie the socialists represented their own progressive phase, and pressed ultimately for a better government. The establishment of freedom was considered a mechanistic, natural consequence of the conquest of power, or was considered simply utopia.

The movement towards the authoritarian state was long obvious to the radical parties in the bourgeois era. The French Revolution is a condensed version of later history. Robespierre centralized authority in the Committee of Public Safety and reduced the Parliament to a rubber stamp for legislation. He unified the function of administration and control in the Jacobin Party leadership. The state regulated the economy. The rational community penetrated all aspects of life with fraternity and denunciation. Private wealth became almost illegal. Robespierre and his cohorts also planned to expropriate the internal enemy; the people's well directed anger was part of the political machinery. The French Revolution tended towards totalitarianism. Its struggle against the church arose not because of its antipathy towards religion, but from the demand that religion should also be incorporated into and serve the patriotic order. The cults of Reason and of the supreme being were spread because of the obstinancy of the Clerics. The "Sansculottes Jesus" announced the coming of the Nordic Christ. Under the Jacobins state capitalism did not get beyond its bloody beginnings.[4] However, the Thermidor did not eliminate its necessity. It appeared repeatedly in the revolutions of the 19th century. In France the successive liberal governments were always short lived. In order to control the statist tendencies rising from below, the bourgeoisie had to hastily call upon Bonapartism from above. The government of Louis Blanc fared no better than the Directory. With the crushing of the workers in June 1848, the national workshops and the right to work could only be repressed by unleashing the General. The market economy has shown itself to be increasingly reactionary. If Rousseau's insight, that the great disparities of property were in contradiction to the principle of the nation, consequently set Robespierre, the student of Rousseau, in opposition to Liberalism, then the later growth of capitalist wealth could only be fused with the general interest in a national economic Commonwealth. Under the conditions set by the great industries, a battle occured over who was to receive the heritage of competitive society. The far sighted leaders of the state felt that they were to suffer as much as the masses in the extremist parties, the workers and the ruined petty bourgeois. The murky relationship between Lassalle, the founder of the German Socialist mass party, and Bismarck, the father of German state capitalism, was symbolic. Both aimed at state control. Government and opposition party bureaucrats from the left and right were pushed toward some form of authoritarian state, depending on their

4. See the works of Albert Mathiez, especially "La Réaction Thermidorienne" (Paris, 1929), and "Contributions à l'Histoire Religieuse de la Révolution Française" (Paris, 1907).

position in the social system. It is decisive for the individual which form it finally takes. The unemployed, rentiers, shop owners, and intellectuals await life or death, depending on whether reformism, bolshevism or fascism is victorious.

Integral statism, or state socialism is the most consequential form of the authoritarian state which has freed itself from any dependence on private capital. It increases production at a rate only seen in the transition from the mercantilist period to the liberal era. The fascist countries create a mixed form. Though here too surplus value is brought under state control and distributed. It flows under the old name of profits in great amounts to the industrial magnates and landowners. Through their influence the organization is destroyed and deflected. In integral statism socialization is simply decreed. Private capitalists are eliminated. Henceforth coupons are only clipped from government bonds. As a result of the revolutionary past of the regime, the petty struggles between officials and departments is not, as with fascism, complicated by the differences in the social origin and tied inside the bureaucratic staff. This has led to much friction in fascist regimes. Integral statism is not a retreat but an advance of power. It can exist without racism. However, the producers, to whom capital legally belongs, "remain wage workers, proletarians," no matter how much is done for them. Factory regimentation is extended to the entire society. If the lack of modern technology and the war-like environment had not played into the hands of the bureaucracy, statism would have already outlived its usefulness. In integral statism, even apart from the militaristic encroachment, the absolutism of bureaucracy, whose authority the police enforce to the utmost in all phases of life, stands opposed to the free structuring of society. No economic or juridical measures, only the will of the ruled can lead to the democratization of the system of control. They will be trapped in the vicious circle of poverty, domination, war and poverty until they break through it themselves. Wherever else in Europe these tendencies toward integral statism are present, the prospect exists that the masses will not become enmeshed in bureaucratic control. It cannot be predicted whether or not this will succeed, and cannot therefore be worked out once and for all in praxis. Only the bad in history is irrevocable: the unrealized possibilities, missed opportunities, muder with and without legal procedures, and that which those in power inflict upon humanity. *The other is always in danger.*

The authoritarian state is repressive in all of its forms. The measureless waste is no longer produced by economic mechanisms in the classical sense. It arises out of the exorbitant needs of the power apparatus and the destruction of any initiative on the part of those ruled: obedience is not so productive. In spite of the alleged absence of crises there is no harmony. Even though the surplus value is no longer absorbed as profit, it is still the focal point. Circulation is eliminated and exploitation modified. The proposition widespread in the market economy, which held that the anarchy of the society corresponds to stringent factory regimentation, today has come to mean that the international state of nature, the battle for the world market, and the fascist discipline of the people are mutual conditions for one another. Even though today the elites have conspired against their own people, they are always ready to poach even more from their hunting

grounds. Economic and disarmament conferences postpone trade for a while. The principle of control manifests itself as a permanent mobilization. The situation remains in itself absurd. The restriction of productive forces can of course from now on be understood as a condition of power and deliberately practiced. It is the catechism of the art of authoritarian rule that the differences between the ranks, whether it be skilled or unskilled labor or between races must be systematically furthered by all media of communication—newspapers, radio, and movies—to isolate individuals from one another. They should listen to everyone, from the Führer to the local boss, but not to each other. They should be informed about everything, from the nation's policies for peace to the use of blackout lamps, but they should not inform themselves. They should lay their hands on everything, but not on the leadership. Humanity is thoroughly educated and mutilated. If a country, for example, the United States or Europe, is great and powerful enough, the machinery of oppression used against the internal enemy must find a pretext in the threats of the external enemy. While hunger and the danger of war are necessary, uncontrollable and inevitable results of a market economy, they can be constructively utilized by the authoritarian state.

Even if the end of the last phase will come at an unexpected time or place, it will hardly be brought about by the resurrected mass party, which could only replace the existing rulers. The activity of political groups and isolated persons may decisively help to prepare them for freedom. The authoritarian state has to fear the opposing mass parties only as competitors. They do not threaten the principle of the authoritarian state itself. In reality the enemy is everywhere and nowhere. Only in the beginning do most of the victims come from the defeated mass party. Later the entire people sheds its blood. The selection for the concentration camps becomes more and more arbitrary. If the number of inmates increases or decreases, or even if for a period of time the empty places of those killed cannot be filled again, *in principle anyone could be there.* The crime that leads to the camps is committed every day in everyone's thoughts. Under fascism everyone dreams of assassinating the Führer, and marches in rank and file. They follow out of sober calculation: the Führer would be succeeded only by his deputy. If the people once refuse to march anymore, they will realize their dreams. The often cited political immaturity of the masses behind which party bureaucrats like to hide is in reality nothing but scepticism toward the leadership. The workers have learned that they have nothing to expect from those who called them out from time to time, only to send them home again, but more of the same—even after a victory. In the French Revolution it took the masses five years to become indifferent to whether Robespierre or Barras was in power. No conclusions about the future can be drawn from a lucid apathy built on a resistance to the whole political facade. With the experience that their political will can indeed change their own lives through changing society, the apathy of the masses will disappear. Such apathy is a trait of capitalism, in all of its phases. A generalizing sociology suffered from the fact that it was practiced primarily by people of the middle and upper middle classes who differentiate too conscientiously. The millions below learn through their experience from

childhood on that the various phases of capitalism belong to one and the same system. Authoritarian or liberal, society for them means hunger, police control and the draft. Under fascism the masses are predominantly interested in seeing that the foreigners do not succeed, because the dependent nation will have to undergo increased exploitation. It is precisely integral statism that still offers them hope, because it hints at something better, and hope works against apathy. The concept of a transitional revolutionary dictatorship was in no way intended to mean the monopoly of the means of production by some new elite. Such dangers can be countered by the energy and alertness of the people themselves. The revolution that ends domination is as far-reaching as the will of the liberated. Any resignation is already a regression into prehistory. After the old positions of power have been dissolved, society will either govern its affairs on the basis of free agreements, or else exploitation will continue. The recurrence of political reaction and a new destruction of the beginnings of freedom cannot theoretically be ruled out, and certainly not as long as a hostile environment exists. No patented system worked out in advance can preclude regressions. The modalities of the new society are first found in the process of social transformation. The theoretical conception which, following its first trailblazers, will show the new society its way—the system of workers' councils—grows out of praxis. The roots of the council system go back to 1871, 1905, and other events. *Revolutionary transformation has a tradition that must continue.*

The future form of collective life has a chance to endure, not because it will rest upon a more refined constitution but because domination is exhausting itself in state capitalism. As a result of the praxis of state capitalism, the efficient management of production, the exchange between city and countryside and the provisioning of the big cities no longer represent major difficulties. The control of the economy which earlier grew out of the deceitful initiative of private entrepreneurs, consists of simple operations that can be learned just like building and operating machines. To the dissolution of entrepreneurial genius succeeds the dissolution of the Führer's wisdom. Their functions can be executed by modestly trained workers. *More and more, economic questions are becoming technical ones.* The privileged position of administrative officers and technical and planning engineers will lose its rational basis in the future; naked power is becoming its only justification. The awareness that the rationality of domination is already in decline when the authoritarian state takes over society is the real basis of its identity with terrorism and also with Engels' theory that prehistory comes to an end with such a state. Before it died out in the fascist countries, the constitution was an instrument of domination. Since the French and English revolutions, it has been through constitutions that the European bourgeoisie kept the government under control and secured its property. Such a constitution today becomes the desire of minorities since the rights of the individual could not be limited to one group but had to be formally universal. In a new society, a constitution will be of no more importance than train schedules and traffic regulations are now. "How often have laws, currencies, institutions and customs been banned," complained Dante about the instability of the Florentine constitution, "and

the citizenry seen the emergence of new forms?"[5] What was danger for the decayed rule of the patrician families would be a characteristic trait of a classless society: *the forms of free association do not merge with the system.*

Just as thought by itself cannot project the future, neither can it determine the point in time. According to Hegel, the stages of the World Spirit follow one another with logical necessity and none can be omitted. In this respect Marx remained true to him. History is represented as an indivisible development. The new cannot begin before its time. However, the fatalism of both philosophers refers to the past only. Their metaphysical error, namely that history obeys a defined law, is cancelled by their historical error, namely that such a law was fulfilled at its appointed time. The present and past are not subject to the same law. Nor does a new social period begin. There is progress in prehistory. It governs all stages up to the present. It might be said of past historical enterprises that the time was not yet ripe for them. Present talk of inadequate conditions is a cover for the tolerance of oppression. For the revolutionary, conditions have always been ripe. What in retrospect appears as a preliminary stage or a premature situation was once for a revolutionary a last chance for change. A revolutionary is with the desperate people for whom everything is on the line, not with those who have time. The invocation of a scheme of social stages which demonstrates *post festum* the impotence of a past era was *at the time* an inversion of theory and politically bankrupt. Part of the meaning of theory is the time at which it is developed. The theory of the growth of the means of production, of the sequence of the various modes of production, and of the task of the proletariat is neither a historical painting to be gazed upon nor a scientific formula for calculating future events. It formulates the adequate consciousness for a definite phase of the struggle and as such can be recognized again in later conflicts. If truth is perceived as property, it becomes its opposite and hence subject to relativism which draws its critical elements from the same ideal of certainty as absolute philosophy. Critical theory is of a different kind. It rejects the kind of knowledge that one can bank on. It confronts history with that possibility which is always concretely visible within it. The maturity of an historical situaton is the topic *probandum* and *probatum*. Although the later course of history confirmed the Girondists against the Montagnards and Luther against Münzer, mankind was not betrayed by the untimely attempts of the revolutionaries but by the timely attempts of the realists. The improvement of the means of production may have improved not only the chances of oppression but also of the elimination of oppression. But the consequence that flows from historical materialism today as formerly from Rousseau or the Bible, that is, the insight that "now or in a hundred years" the horror will come to an end, was always appropriate.

The bourgeois upheavals depended in fact on the ripeness of the situation, their successes, from the reformists to the legal revolution of fascism, was tied to the technical and economic achievements that mark the progress of capitalism. They shorten the predetermined development. The idea of midwifery fits precisely the history of the bourgeoisie. Its material

5. *Divine Comedy* (Purgatory), K. zu Putlitz, Germ. trans., "Tempelsausgabe," VI, Verse 145-148.

forms of existence had been developed before it obtained political power. The theory of accelerated development has dominated "politique scientifique" since the French Revolution. With St. Simon's imprimatur Comte formulated the thought as a political guideline: "It makes a great difference if one simply follows the course of history without reflection or with insight into its causal relations. Historical changes occur in both cases, but they announce themselves earlier, and they happen above all only after they have, depending on their nature and significance, shaken society in an appropriately foreboding way."[6] The knowledge of historical laws which govern the succession of social forms, for the St.-Simonians, softens the impact of the revolution, while for the Marxists it strengthens it. Both ascribe to such knowledge the function of shortening a process which completes itself autonomously and almost naturally. "The revolutionary transformation," says Bebel, "that changes all social relations, and in particular the role of women, is already happening before our eyes. It is only a matter of time before society undertakes this transformation on a larger scale and accelerates and generalizes the process, thereby making everyone without exception participate in its numerous and many-faceted advantages."[7] Thus is the revolution reduced to the intensive transition to state capitalism which was then already announcing itself. Despite pious references to the Hegelian logic of leaps and reversals, transformation appeared essentially as an extension of scale: the first attempts at planning should be reinforced and distribution made more rational. *The doctrine of midwifery degrades the revolution to mere progress.*

Dialectic is not identical with development. Two contradictory moments, the transition to state control and liberation from it, are seized as one in the concept of social revolution. Revolution brings about what would happen without spontaneity in any case: the socialization of the means of production, planned management of production, and unlimited control of nature. And it also brings about what will not happen without resistance and constantly renewed efforts to strengthen freedom: *the end of exploitation.* Such an outcome is not a further acceleration of progress, but a qualitative leap out of the dimension of progress. The rational is never totally deducible. It is conceived everywhere in the historical dialectic as the break with class society. The theoretical arguments for the idea that state capitalism is the last stage of class society are based on the notion that the existing material conditions make possible and promote that leap. The theories from which these arguments stem indicate the objective possibilities to the conscious will. When this theory portrays the phases of bourgeois economy, bloodshed and collapse as an immanent law of development in the transition to freedom, the notion of the self-movement of this process breaks down. One can determine today what the leaders of the masses will inflict upon the masses, if both forces are not abolished. That is part of the immanent law of development. One can not determine what a free society will do or permit. The self-movement of the concept of the commodity leads to the concept of state capitalism, just as for Hegel sense

6. Auguste Comte, "Système de politique positive," in *Oeuvres de St. Simon,* Vol. 9 (Paris, 1973), p. 115.

7. August Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (Stuttgart, 1919), p. 474.

certainty leads to absolute knowledge. For Hegel, however, the stages of the Concept necessarily correspond to physical and social nature without any further hindrance, because the Concept and reality are not merely different but, because both in the end as well as in essence, are actually the same. Materialist thought, on the other hand, should not permit itself to consider this identity as a certainty in fact. The appearance of conditions which can be inferred from the Concept gives the idealist a feeling of contentment, and the historical materialist the feeling of rebellion. Both are disappointed when human society does in fact pass through all the phases which can be derived from their own concept as the inversion of free and equal exchange into unfreedom and injustice. The Idealist dialectic preserves the Noble, the Good, the Eternal; every historical situation is said to contain the Ideal, but not in explicit form. *The identity of the ideal and the real is considered the presupposition and the goal of history.* The materialist dialectic deals with the common, the bad, the transitory; every historical situation contains the ideal, only not explicitly. The identity of the ideal and reality is universal exploitation. Therefore, Marxist science constitutes the critique of bourgeois economy and not the expounding of a socialist one; Marx left that task for Bebel. Marx himself explained the reality of the ideology of bourgeois economy in the dissection of official economy. He discovered the secret of the economy itself. Smith and Ricardo are disposed of, society is indicted.

The deduction of the capitalist phases from simple commodity production through monopoly and state capitalism is of course not an experiment in thought. The principle of exchange is not only formulated in thought, but it has governed reality. The contradictions which the critique reveals in this principle have made themselves drastically obvious in history. The worker is both rewarded and cheated in the exchange of labor power as a commodity. The equality of commodity owners is an ideological illusion which breaks down in an industrial system and which yields to overt domination in an authoritarian state. The development of bourgeois society is limited in its mode of production, which is characterized by the economic principle of exchange. Despite the real validity of this principle, there has never been a congruence between its critical representation and its historical development which could not be broken down. The difference between concept and reality—not the concept itself—is the foundation for the possibility of revolutionary praxis. A necessary relationship exists in class society between the changes in the mode of production and the course of an ideology; this relationship can be deduced conceptually. But the necessity of past events determines the will toward freedom which is present in class society as little as does the inevitability of future events. For every conclusion stemming from the belief that history will follow a progressing line (regardless of whether one considers this line to be straight, spiral, or zig-zag), there is a counter-argument which is no less valid. Theory explains essentially the course of destiny. In all the consistency which theory can find in economic development, in all the logic of the succession of individual social epochs, in all the increases in productive power, methods, and skills—the capitalist antagonisms have in fact been growing. Through them human beings will ultimately define themselves. These antagonisms are today not only more capable of producing freedom, but also less capable.

Not only freedom, but also future forms of oppression are possible. They can be theoretically evaluated as either regressions or as ingenious new equipment. With state capitalism those in power can strengthen their position even more. State capitalism is, to be sure, an antagonistic, transient phenomenon. The law of its collapse is readily visible: it is based on the limitation of productivity due to the existence of the bureaucracies. However, the propagation of authoritarian forms has still much room in which to operate; and it would not be the first time that a long period of heightened oppression followed a period of increased independence for the oppressed. Athenian industry and Roman landowning to a large extent introduced slavery, as free workers became too demanding and expensive. In the last part of the Middle Ages, the freedom which the peasants had obtained in the 14th century because of the decrease in their numbers, was taken away. The indignation at the thought that even the limited freedom of the 19th century is being eliminated in the long run by state capitalism, by the "socialization of poverty," stems from the knowledge that no barriers exist any longer for socialized wealth. But upon these conditions for social wealth rests not only the opportunity to demolish modern slavery, but just as much the opportunity for its continuation. The objective spirit is always the product of the adaptation of established power to the conditions of its existence. Despite the open conflict between church and state in the Middle Ages, between the world-encompassing cartels of the present, the opposing forces have neither destroyed each other, nor fully joined together. Either alternative would be the end of the ruling power which must maintain this antagonism within itself if it is to endure the antagonism between itself and those it dominates. A world cartel is impossible. It would revert at once into freedom. The few big monopolies, which maintain their competition despite identical manufacturing methods, and products, furnish a model for future international constellations. Two friendly-hostile blocks of varying composition could rule the entire world; they could offer their followers, in addition to the *fasci*, better merchandise, at the expense of colonial and semi-colonial populations. As mutual threats they could always find new reasons to continue military armament. The increase in production, which would first be accelerated and later slowed by bourgeois property relations, in itself corresponds in no way to human needs. Today this increased production serves only the ruling class. Trees should not grow up in the sky. As long as there exists in the world a scarcity of necessary needs, in fact even a scarcity of luxury articles, the rulers will take advantage of the opportunity to isolate from one another individuals and groups, and national and social classes, and thus reproduce its own ruling position. The bureaucracy has taken control of the economic mechanism, which slipped away from the control of the bourgeoisie's pure profit principle. The specialized concept of economics, which in contrast to its critics deals with the decline of the market system, contains no further objections to the capability of the existence of state capitalism than the objections which Mises and his associates raised against socialism. These people live today only for the fight against the social reforms in democratic countries, and they have completely lost their influence. The essence of liberal criticism consists of economic-technical considerations. Without to some extent an

unobstructed operation of the old mechanisms of supply and demand, productive industrial methods would not be differentiated from unproductive ones. The limited intelligence, which stuck obstinately to such arguments against historical progress, was so bound to the existing order that it did not see that the triumph of the existing order would result in Fascism. Capitalism may still exist for a time, even after its liberal phase is over. The fascist phase is, of course, determined by the same economic tendencies which already has destroyed the market system. It is not the impossibility of the smooth functioning of the international market, but the international crisis which is perpetuated by the authoritarian state, which allows a humanity already demoralized by the authoritarian forms no other choice. The eternal system of the authoritarian state, as terrible as the threat may seem, is no more real than the eternal harmony of the market economy. If the exchange of equivalent goods was just a guise for inequality, then the fascist plan is simply robbery.

Today's possibilities are no less than the despair. State capitalism, as the most recent phase of history, contains more power to organize the economically retarded territories of the world than did the previous phase, whose decisive representatives exhibit their limited power and initiative. They were moved by the fear of losing their profitable social position: they were willing to do anything which would not in the long run forfeit the help of future Fascism. The regenerated form of ruling power appears in Fascism and they anticipate the power they would have if victorious. The wealth accumulated over the centuries and the diplomatic experience which goes along with it is used to insure that the legitimate rulers of Europe themselves control its unification, and once again prevent integral statism. The era of the authoritarian state can be broken both by such regressions as well as by attempts to establish actual freedom. These attempts, which by their very nature tolerate no bureaucracies, can come only from the isolated. Everyone is isolated. The sullen yearnings of the atomized masses and the conscious will of the underground resistance point in the same direction. To the extent that there existed among the instigators of previous revolutions of collective resistance a sense of infallibility, the masses were only the followers. A direct line leads from the leftist opponents of Robespierre's state socialism to the plotting of the same leftists under the Directory. As long as the party is still a group not yet alienated from its anti-authoritarian goals, as long as solidarity is not replaced by obedience, as long as the party does not confuse the dictatorship of the proletariat with the rule of the most clever party tacticians—then its general line will be determined precisely by those deviations of which a ruling clique naturally knows how to quickly rid itself. As long as the avant garde has the ability to act without periodic purges, the hope for a classless condition will continue to live on. The two phases in which, according to the prescription of tradition, a classless society is to come to fruition, have little to do with the ideology which today serves the perpetuation of integral statism. Since an unlimited amount of consumer goods and luxury items still seems like a dream, the ruling class, which should have faded away in the first phase, is said to be able to reinforce its position. Reassured by poor harvests and a housing shortage, it proclaims that the reign of the secret police will

disappear when the land of milk and honey has been reached. Engels, on the contrary, is a utopian; he merges the socialization of the means of production and the end of oppression into one. "The first act in which the state really appears as a representative of the entire society, the seizure of the means of production in the name of society, is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The intervention of power of the state in social relations will become unnecessary in one area after another and then wither away naturally."[8] He did not believe that the unlimited increase in material production prerequisite of a human society, or a classless democracy would be attainable only when the whole world is fully populated with tractors and radios. Praxis has not disproven the theory, but rather interpreted it. The enemies of the state power have fallen asleep, but not of their own accord. With each bit of planning completed, a bit of repression was originally supposed to become unnecessary. Instead, more repression has developed in the administration of the plans. Whether the increase in production actualizes or destroys socialism cannot be decided abstractly.

Dread in the expectation of an authoritarian epoch does not hinder the resistance. The exercise of administrative functions by a class or party can be replaced after the abolition of privilege by forms of a classless democracy which can prevent the elevation of the administrative sector to positions of power. Though the bourgeoisie earlier held the government in check through its property, the administration in a new society would only be kept from becoming oppressive by the uncompromising independence of the citizenry. Even today its followers are no less a danger to the authoritarian state than the free worker was to liberalism. The belief that one is acting in the name of something greater than oneself is bankrupt. Not a few Marxists paid homage to it. Without the feeling of being a member of a large party, or having an honored leader, world history or at least infallible theory on their side, their socialism did not function. The devotion to the marching masses, the enthusiastic submission to collectivity, the whole Philistine dream which met with Nietzsche's scorn, celebrates a happy resurrection with the authoritarian youth organizations. The revolution, which was a vocation on the same level as science, led to jail or to Siberia. But since the victory, a career beckons, if nowhere else, at least in the party hierarchy. There are not only professors, but also revolutionaries of prominence. The mass media assimilate the revolution by absorbing its leaders into their list of celebrities. The isolated individual who is not appointed or protected by any power cannot expect fame. Even so he is a power because everyone is isolated. Their only weapon is the word. The more it is bandied about by the barbarians within and the cultural sophisticates abroad, the more its power is restored. The impotent utterances in the totalitarian state are more dangerous than the most impressive party proclamations under Wilhelm II. Whenever a new jargon stands between themselves and their paying readers, it does not take the German intellectuals very long to learn to use it. Language has always been of more use to them in the struggle for existence than in the expression of truth. Their earnestness is revealed again in the betrayal of language to commerce. It is as if they feared that the German language could drive them further than seems consistent with their

8. Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus*, p. 302.

tolerated existence and the justified demands of their patrons. The men of the Enlightenment had much less to risk. Their opposition harmonized with the interests of the bourgeoisie, which had a good deal of power even then. Voltaire and the Encyclopedists had their protectors. Beyond that harmony no minister of state would go along with them. Jean Meslier had to hold his tongue throughout his life; the Marquis spent his life in jails. But if the word can be a spark, it has yet to set anything on fire. It is in no sense propaganda and hardly a call to action. It seeks to say what everyone knows and at the same time forbids himself to know. It does not impose itself by the skillful uncovering of state secrets which only the powerful know. The free-floating politician of the mass party whose blustering rhetoric has faded away, today indulges in talk of statistics, the national economy and "inside stories." His manner of speaking has become prosaic and well-informed. He maintains an ostensible contact with the workers and expresses himself in export figures and synthetic materials. He knows better than the Fascists and masochistically intoxicates himself with the facts, which have already passed him by. When one can no longer invoke violence, knowledge must suffice.

Whoever depends on human domination of the world can look to no court of appeal, to no existing or future power. The question of what "one" should do with power once one has it, the same question which was so meaningful for the bureaucrats of the mass party, loses its meaning in a struggle against them. The question presupposes the continued existence of that which should disappear: the power to dispose of the labor of others. If society in the future really functions through free agreement rather than through direct or indirect force, the result of such an agreement cannot be theoretically anticipated. Proposals for the economy beyond the one which is already at hand under state capitalism could eventually be useful. Contemporary reflection in the service of a transformed society should not disregard the fact that in a classless democracy plans cannot be forced on others through power or through routine, but must be arrived at through free agreement. This consciousness would keep no one who accepts the possibility of a changed world from considering how people could live without politics of genetic regulation and penal authority, model factories and repressed minorities. It is, of course, more questionable than the neo-humanist Germans tend to think, whether the dismantling of the authoritarian bureaucracy would be accompanied by popular orgies of revenge. If the ousting of the rulers is once again accomplished by terror, then these isolated individuals will passionately insist that it fulfill their will. Nothing on earth can any longer justify violence except the necessity of putting an end to violence itself. If the opponents are right that after the fall of the fascist machinery of terror, chaos will reign, not just for a moment but until a new form of terrorist oppression takes over, then humanity is lost. The assertion that without a new authoritarian bureaucracy the machines, the knowledge, the technical and administrative methods, the entire system for providing necessities as attained under an authoritarian state would be ruinous, is a pretext. Their first concern when they think about freedom is the new penal system, not its abolition. "The masses," it says in a pamphlet of "educational material," "will free political

prisoners and jail their oppressors instead." Specialists in oppression will offer their services en masse. Whether or not that happens again depends on those who are not specialists. The role of the specialists can be all the less important, since the means of production need not be developed much beyond the forms existing under integral statism. State capitalism sometimes seems almost like a parody of the classless society. There are indications that for technical reasons its centralization of production will survive. If small units take on more importance in relation to the central administration in modern industrial production and strategy, so that the elite workers have to be more and more pampered by the central leadership, then this is the visible expression of a general economic upheaval. The degradation of individuals to mere centers of reaction which respond to every stimulus, at the same time prepares their emancipation from the central command.

Thus the perfect weapons that the bureaucracy has at its disposal could not ward off change forever if it did not have something besides its immediate power. The individual has constituted himself historically in fear. There is a further stage of fear beyond the fear of death, from which point it again dissolves. The completion of centralization in society and state pushes its driving forces to decentralize. It continues the paralysis to which the age of heavy industry has already pushed the human being through his increasing dispensability, through his separation from productive labor, and through continuous worry about the wretched social welfare. The course of progress appears to the victims as though freedom or lack of freedom did not matter for their well being. Freedom suffers the same fate as did virtue in Valery's conception. It is no longer fought over, but forgotten, and in any case embalmed like the slogan of democracy after the last war. Everyone agrees today that the word "freedom" should only be used as a phrase; to take it seriously is utopian. At one time the critique of utopia helped to maintain the thought of freedom as the thought of its realization. *Today utopia is maligned because no one really wants to see its realization.* They strangle the imagination, which Bebel already took lightly.[9] If the terror of the Gestapo at least brings into existence certain subversive tendencies, beyond the borders of Germany it also produces a disastrous respect for the lasting power of coercion. Instead of the present anti-Semitic, relentless and aggressive form of state capitalism, there are still dreams of a state capitalism which would, with the grace of the older world powers, rule the people. "There is no other socialism than that which is achieved by authoritarian means," concludes the state economist Pirou.[10] "In our era the authority of the state is exercised in the framework of the nation. Thus socialism, even when it is internationally oriented, can only carry out its program nationally." Those immediately involved in the struggle are of the same opinion as the observers. No matter how honestly they intend to build a "workers' democracy," the dictatorial measures necessary for its security, the "substitution" of a new ruling mechanism for the present one, the belief in the "vanguard role" of the party, in short, all the categories of repression

9. See Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*, pp. 141 ff.
10. Gaetan Pirou, *Néo-liberalisme, néo-corporatisme, néo-socialisme* (Paris, 1939), p. 173.

which are probably necessary, conceal so well the realistic foreground that the image on the horizon always spoken of by socialist politicians looks suspiciously like a mirage. Just as liberal critics of harsh punishment who are appointed to the Ministry of Justice by a bourgeois revolution are usually worn out after a few years because their efforts are obstructed by provincial administrators, so the politicians and intellectuals seem to be exhausted by the tenacity of the existing order. The lesson to be learned from fascism, and even more from bolshevism, is that what seems like madness to a detached analysis is at times the reality, and that politics, as Hitler said, is not the art of the possible but of the impossible. Moreover, this development is not so unexpected as one might think. In order to conduct their affairs in solidarity with one another, people will have to change their natures much less than they have already been changed by fascism. The narrow-minded and cunning creatures that call themselves men will some day be seen as caricatures, evil masks behind which a better possibility decays. In order to penetrate those masks, the imagination would need powers of which fascism has already divested it. The force of imagination is absorbed in the struggle every individual must wage in order to live. But the material conditions have been satisfied. Despite the necessity of transition, dictatorship, terrorism, work and sacrifice, the alternative depends only on human will. Problems which a few decades ago were thought to be insuperable, technical or organizational barriers have been overcome for all to see. As a result the simplistic teachings of economism, which were so prosaic, were dissolved into philosophical anthropologies. When technology can produce stockings out of thin air, one then has to reach for the eternal in man, namely to declare inalterable certain psychological characteristics, in order to rationalize eternal domination.

The fact that even the enemies of the authoritarian state can no longer conceive of freedom destroys communication. A language in which one does not recognize his own desires or become impassioned is alien. Thus the bourgeoisie is no longer upset in the slightest over its own non-conformist literature; it has brought Tolstoy into the movies and Maupassant into the drugstore. Not only the categories in which the future is depicted but also those in which the present is dealt with have become ideological. The conditions for the realization of utopia are so urgently ripe that they can no longer be honestly articulated. Any thought which is difficult to use and to label rightly arouses stronger mistrust in the courts of knowledge and literature than the very professions of a Marxist doctrine. The confessions to which such thinking was seduced through friendly persuasion in the pre-fascist era, in order to be rid of it once and for all later on, were equally useless for the subjugated. Theory has no program for the electoral campaign, or even for the reconstruction of Europe which the specialists will soon see to. The readiness to obey, even when it sets out to think, is of no use to theory. Despite all the urgency with which theory attempts to illuminate the movement of the social totality even in its smallest detail, it is unable to prescribe to individuals an effective form of resistance to injustice. Thought itself is already a sign of resistance, the effort to keep oneself from being deceived any longer. Thought is not absolutely opposed to command and obedience, but sets them for the time being in relationship

to the task of making freedom a reality. This relationship is in danger. Sociological and psychological concepts are too superficial to express what has happened to revolutionaries in the last few decades: their will toward freedom has been damaged, without which neither understanding nor solidarity nor a correct relation between leader and group is conceivable.

If there is no return to liberalism, the appropriate form of activity appears to be the extension of state capitalism. To work with it, expand it and extend it everywhere to advanced forms appears to offer the advantage of progress and all the security of success, which one can only desire for *politique scientifique*. Since the proletariat has nothing to expect from the old world powers, there would appear to be no choice but an alliance with the new ones. Since the planned economy which the leaders of nations are creating is closer to socialism than liberalism is, there should be an alliance between the leader and the proletariat. It would be sentimental to remain opposed to state capitalism merely because of those who have been slain. One could say that the Jews were for the most part capitalists, and that the small nations have no justification for their existence. State capitalism is said to be the only thing possible today. As long as the proletariat does not make its own revolution, there remains no choice for it and its theoreticians but to follow the *Weltgeist* on the path it has chosen. Such opinions, and there are plenty of them, are neither the most stupid nor the most dishonest. This much is true, that with the return to the old free enterprise system, the entire horror would start again from the beginning under new management. But the historical outlook of such reasoning recognizes only the dimension of the cycle of progress and regression; it ignores the active intervention of men. It values men only for what they are under capitalism: as social quantities, as things. as long as world history follows its logical course, it fails to fulfill its human destiny.

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Publication date: First issue November 1, 1973

Editors: Burns, Dickson, Goodman, Green, Gross, Hales, Harper, Lamb, Metzger, Pickvance, Rosenhead, Ryan, Waddell, Werskey, Wolff, J. Young, R. Young.

First issue: Tentative table of contents:
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